

Andrew Jackson to Henry Dearborn, November 12, 1803, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO HENRY DEARBORN.¹

¹ Secretary of War.

Hunter's Hill, November 12, 1803

Sir, Your letter of the 31st Ultimo, reached me today, the contents duly observed, I hasten to answer, That the Boats required, shall be ready to sale against the 20th of next month, if within the reach of Possibility, and in procuring them oeconomy shall be attended to, as far as the shortness of time and the scarcity of hands at this busy season will permit.

I view with extreme regret, the necessity for this precautionary measure, and this at a period, when it was generally thought, and believed that the wisdom of our government, had laid the lasting basis of peace by the purchase of Louisiana in this quarter. But *Sir*, if we should be, by the conduct of Spain compelled into the measure, and war be the ultimatum you will find the spirit of Patriotism prevade the minds of the militia in the west, and that the regiments required will be readily filled; of this there is no doubt, unless their ardor should be abated by the mode the Governor has adopted in his selection of officers.

Permit me here to state, that the militia by the constitution of this State has a right to appoint, and elect their own officers, from that of a Lieutenant up to the colo. This being their right secured to them by the constitution, they view any change from this an act of usurpation, which the mind revolts at, and creates opposition. I am Just informed, and that too through a respectable channel that the Governor has assumed the power to appoint any person he pleases to office, taking them from the ranks, and paying no respect to

Library of Congress

the selection of officers already appointed agreeable to the existing rules and regulations of the state. I am also informed, that this has given offence to the officers commanding companies, and that they make use of all their influence to prevent those new created officers from taking any part of their company from them by enlistment, or otherwise; this I fear, will have a banefull effect, and occassion a serious delay in filling up the regiments.

There are a number of (Volunteer) independant companies who expected to have been called upon to march and held themselves bound to do so, at a minutes warning. These I am just informed have been neglected, not even a request command or invitation to march. This information comes to me directly from one of the independant corps, accompanied with a complaint of neglect on the part of the Governor. Unfortunately for our state at present, we have a governor who has always through life been governed by selfish motives regardless of Publick good, and unfortunately in the present instance he persues the system, of giving appointments to those who are his favourites, without consulting the Benefit of the publick service. If this system is not put an end to, by the interference of the general Government I fear that the Federal party will have to say that the militia cannot be relied on in cases of sudden immergency, and I am well assured if proper measures had been adopted the full quota of men required of this state could have been brought to the field in three weeks.

Various complaints of the above description having been made to me, I thought it my duty to communicate the same to you, that as congress is in session if necessary, they might Provide by law that in all cases that hereafter might arise, where the services of the militia may be required, that the[y]³ shall be commanded, by their own officers appointed agreeable to the established laws of the state from which they are called. this I well know would have a tendency, to bring to the field at an early day any number of militia required. I can say with certainty, that it would be a pleasing tour to the militia of this Dist, when commanded by an officer in whom the [y] had confidence, to march to chastise those Dons, who would dare to infringe our rights or trample upon the Treaty. Should my attention to any business be thought necessary in this quarter to promote the Publick

Library of Congress

service it will be with pleasure rendered, and should my services in the field be required with promptness I will obey, and rest assured that my exertions shall not be wanting to bring to the field the requisition made upon the state. Health and respect.